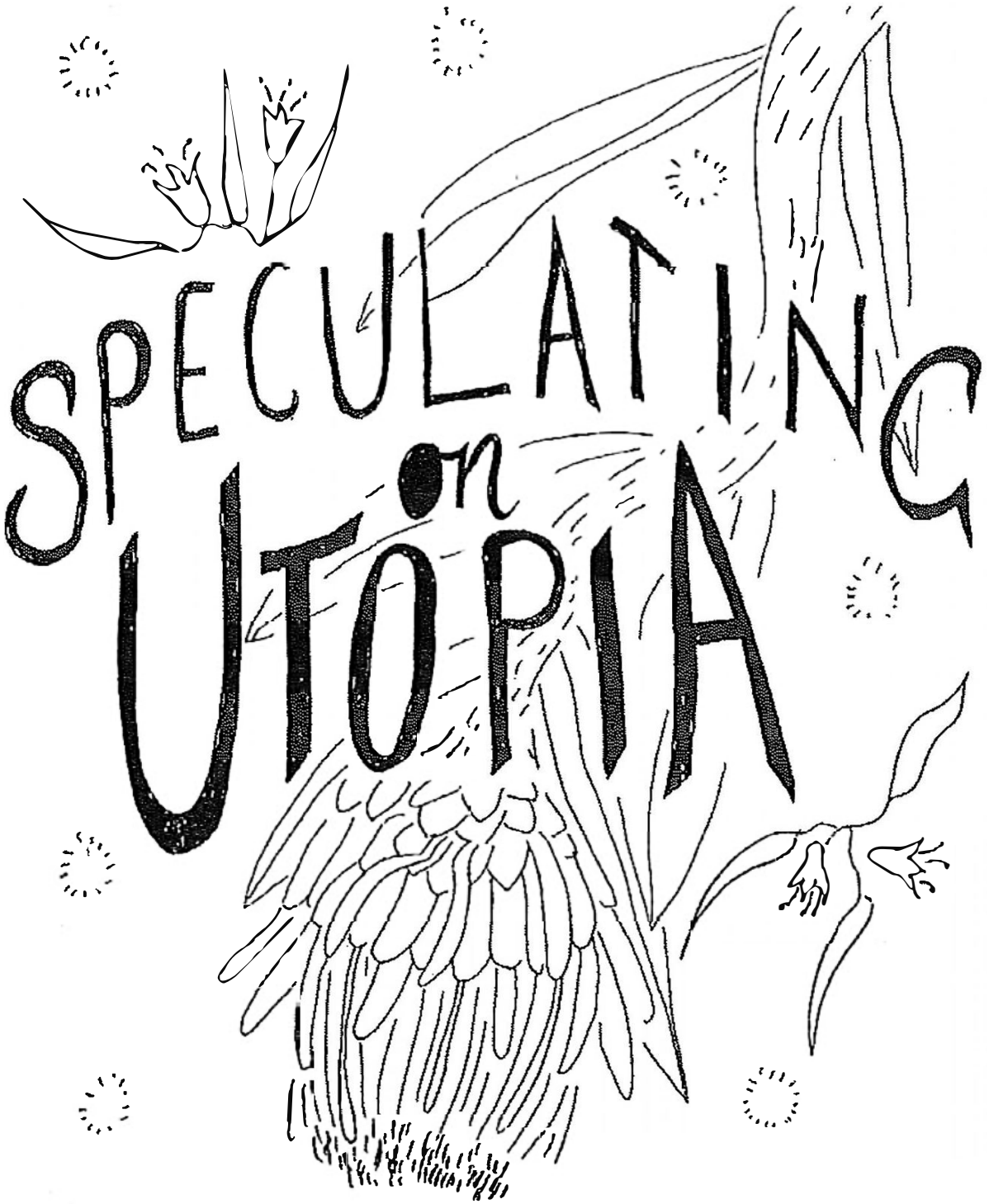
SPECULATING
on
UTOPIA

This zine is a haphazard collection of fiction and poetry, collected before we joined the blockade of the International Mining and Resources Conference 2019.

Sometimes we are so stuck in our everyday world, so consumed by it and often exhausted by it, that we cannot imagine a world beyond it. But imagining is the first step in creating. If we lose the ability to imagine, to see the possibility of a different way of being in the world and with each other, we stop trying to make it happen. We lose the courage and the motivation and the hope. We stop believing that we have any power at all. That is not only untrue, but it is a deliberate function of the systems that have been created to keep some people and groups in power and everybody else scrambling to get by every day. To keep us as ineffective and helpless and disempowered as possible.

The blockade is taking place on stolen lands of the Boonwurrung and Woiwurung people of the Kulin Nation.
This zine was also collated on the Wurundjeri lands of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to the traditional custodians and to the elders past, present and emerging.

Change?

By Aia

I am returning
I follow the road until it becomes one I know
It was a long trip, driving from country to country in so-called Australia
I saw friends
I listened
Many learnings arose
Many connections formed
I return with a new perspective
The car drives me to the top of a hill where I pause and look down on the city I know as my home
Questions arise
Is this still the city I know?
Are the streets still clogged with traffic and fumes from burnt petrol, the strangers still cold and unsmiling?
Are the trees still built up on the side-walk with rain water flowing beside them in the gutter, nutrients and life just out of reach?
Are the birds still as grey as the concrete we continue to pour over ancient, sacred country and the people still denying themselves a world of love, of nourishment?
Will anything, anything at all, have changed?
I let myself imagine
I let myself hope
Maybe the start of the world I long for has begun!
I can see it!
The people have all stopped
Mid-argument, mid-sales-pitch, mid-act-of-oppression, mid-looking-away
Everyone has just… stopped
A wave of warm, sweet smelling air flows through the city
With a mass inhale and long, deep exhale, people have stopped to listen
Everyone has stopped to feel what is in their heart, their soul, their body
They sit down on the street and close their eyes to hear their own heart beat
They can hear who they are and what they want
They've stopped to listen to the sound of the wind flowing through the sky-scrapers
They can sense an uneasiness with such monstrous buildings and the greed of our capitalist system

They've stopped to ask the person next to them, "How are you?" and listen with curiosity and full attention to their reply
They can feel the connection growing
They've stopped to notice the absurdity of our busy city and the person asking for money on the street
They can hear the injustices in their stories
They've stopped to wonder what they would rather be doing right now instead of rushing off to an unfulfilling job that takes them away from their kids... what would really bring them and those around them happiness?
They can imagine other ways
They've stopped to fall to their knees and cry for all the times they have ignored their own desire to live some other life, a habit that has caused so much hurt
Someone approaches and offers a hug
They console each other
"Me too, me too."
They've stopped to listen to what every inch of their being has been asking for - autonomy, pleasure, love, connection...
All of it
They can hear and feel and sense and imagine all the pain and all the opportunity and it is so overwhelming to be exposed to so much, so unexpectedly
Yet so wonderfully
People are sitting on the street listening to their own needs, to their own bodies, to their loved ones, to strangers
They pick up their phones to watch videos of people overseas, or from other demographics in society and hear their stories
No matter where they are people are listening to the birds and the wind, the rain and the earth, the world around them as it breathes
There is so much to listen to!
While there is pain that so much has gone unheard for so long and a nervousness for the work ahead to heal and to create a world where we do listen, the joy of knowing it is possible outweighs all
We now know that through listening and feeling we can make our way forward, together
We can listen to ourselves and each other and the earth and feel through, rather than think through, all the wondrous possibilities
With an almighty sigh that echoes through the streets the people begin to let go of a past of silence, ignorance and blocked ears
There is a feeling that something has shifted, something big
I bring my hands to my heart and look to the sky
"Let it be real," I think to myself
Slowly, I descend in my car from the hill to go down into the city below
Imagination is powerful
Will anything have changed?

It took endless listening

By Anisa Rogers

I slowly wake up and look out the window at the rows of tomato plants on the oval. The big green fruit are slowly turning red in the summer sun. It will be harvest time soon and most of us will be out in the ovals, re-purposed car parks and anywhere else we could plant, working and laughing and sweating. I've really warmed to being part of growing my own food. Years ago I would have hated the idea of getting into the dirt and doing physical labour. I loved the ease of the supermarket, probably because I was so tired all the time. But it's amazing to be so intricately linked in the creation of my food, watching it slowly grow. Even if some days I would rather stay in bed for a few hours longer.

I stretch, get dressed and trudge out of my dwelling. It's already quite warm, the sun is out and shining fiercely. I walk past the oval and the playground to the big communal kitchen and dining hall that we built in the old church. The early risers have cooked up some porridge and it's delicious. The kids are running around, both helping and really getting in the way. Some of them are slowly trailing off to the learning centre where the elderly will help them with the many projects they are working on. Some of the kids have been working out the wiring in the kitchen to save more electricity which is really exciting, our batteries can only take so much. Other kids will follow around adults helping them with cooking, growing, building, caring and anything else that takes their interest.

This morning I've got my shift at the younger children's area. This is where some of the little kids hang out when the people who usually care for them are busy doing tasks that are best done without a small child around. It's the only fenced part of the community, as some of those little ones can get very far very quickly. As I get closer I see that one of the dogs has broken through the fence again. The debate of what to do with the dogs comes up at community meetings over and over again, it's so exhausting. I'm happy to fix the fence, having the dogs around is so lovely, especially when the little kids are really upset – sometimes only a dog cuddle can help.

I've been doing morning shifts at the young children area for a few months now, it's almost time for rotation. Rotation is key for the different tasks, it gets us involved in all of the things that keep our community going and keeps us sharing skills. I think back to when so many of us had paid nine to five jobs. The idea of sitting in front a computer for so long, the same thing every day, seems incredulous now So many pointless jobs that didn't even meet the needs of our communities, some even destroying the land and locking people up.

After the Big Change it was really hard for a while. People had finally realised that we have to live more simply and in community, especially after the monetary and housing systems crashed. The governments tried to repress the protests for a while, but then even they realised we needed to change the way we live and gave up. It was those that owned the corporations that kept up the fight for the longest, and in some parts of the world they still are, with their hired militias and big walls. A lot ofpeople go out to fight in those areas, and we send them provisions. Solidarity is central to everything we do now, after we pulled our world apart with competition and greed.

I arrive in the children's centre and tell Milena about the broken fence. They are trying to keep two kids from fighting over a wooden duck toy. The never-ending debate about human nature, are we inherently competitive or cooperative? I'm starting to see how we are both, it just depends on what is rewarded in our community. If having power over others is rewarded then we strive for it and tend to ignore the needs of others.

I head out of the children's area to the re-use centre. That is definitely one of my favourite rotation jobs. Going out and finding what we used to think of as trash, and sorting it for re-use. It's amazing what you can find, and the creativity of re-purposing everything is beautiful. I find wire and some posts, grab some tools from the tool library, and head back to the fence.

Sharing everything has been hard for some people, still stuck in the idea that if it isn't privately owned then it won't be looked after. Of course people break things, but now we are living in community there is a stronger feeling of accountability, and people are more likely to fix what they broke or find someone who can. Learning to

live in community was and still is the hardest thing for a lot of us. Changing our mindsets to putting others first, designing our communities to meet everyone's needs, not just those who look like those in power, is hard, but so rewarding. To see the people who were shoved to the edges for so long finally respected and valued just for being.

It took endless listening. And learning how to express our needs and values rather than judge others. Thankfully there were a bunch of groups of people that stepped up and shared their wisdom. Indigenous communities, poor communities, activist communities, so many others. Talking about ways to live communally without dominating each other and other beings. People are having to use skills they had barely used their entire lives. But the memory of the mess we made helps people when ego and impatience seems easier. So much death and destruction, poisoned food and water. Pretty much everyone has lost someone, and watched the storms destroy cities, and the animals we learnt about in our books as children go extinct.

Later today I'll head off to our weekly check-in meeting. A space for people to air feelings and grievances, especially before frustrations get bigger. Sometimes the meetings are lovely, people feel heard, and people are really thankful to hear the things that they could do better, because it comes from a place of love and respect. Other times there is a lot of anger and yelling, but it's important for those emotions to be heard as well, and we are all getting better at listening, communicating and being empathetic.

I'm still tired, like I was before everything changed. Before, I couldn't sleep because I spent too much time on the computer, and too much time worrying about climate change and detention centres and being angry at so many people and myself. But now I'm tired from a hard days work and some good and some difficult conversations. It's a satisfying kind of tired, knowing that we are actually working towards and building a better way of living.

..After the dust had settled...
...We drank a green brew and spun webs...
...I said...
"Green Gypsy,
Tell me all of your greenest dreams..."
Frances Crinshaw and Anne Read. 27.07.19

My Greenest Green Dream
By Frances Grimshaw

I met the green gypsy one strange winters day
Before the winds left and all went away,
I met them when I was quite young and quite kind,
Not long before the transformation of times.

Back then winds would twist 'cross the land,
Pick up the dust, the beetles and sand,
Tie them in knots across the blue sky,
Fill your mouth so coarse and so dry.

In my bedroom I kept some plants so green,
Kept safe by strong and clear glass screens,
They lived never knowing the dusty tides,
That plagued all living things outside.

I watered them with a dropper, every day, it's true,
And I whispered to them everything that I knew,
I told them I too lived my whole life inside,
And although without voices I felt their replies.

Now, on a particularly new winters day,
Which was dry as a bone and dark as a cave,
I woke with a start and leapt out of bed,
"There is something strange here afoot" I said.

There was no squealing or whirring and whooshing,
Outside there had been a great big shooshing,
The winds had slowed to a gentle breeze,
And there were buds of green on the weary grey trees.

In my sight was a person so delicate, so small,
They couldn't have been but 4 feet tall,
They moved 'cross the dust quite thoughtfully,
The most cautious light foot I ever did see.

I called to them and asked if they knew,
Where had went the winds that blew?
They turned to me and with a smile,
Said "I'll tell you if we can sit down for a while."

The dust had settled, and we were all fed,
We drank a green brew and spun delicate webs,
"Green gypsy, tell me all of your greenest dreams"
"If you'll listen, I happily will." They beamed.

"Where do I start? There's a long way to go,
Maybe I'll start with the lands you don't know,
The lands that are wet, fresh and alive,
Really right here, before the extractors arrived.

The extractors dug out the mountains and funnelled the rivers,
They were huge and noisy and gave the singing birds shivers,
They made lots of jobs and the economy grew,
Though no one felt that but a very small few.

They emptied the oceans and they dirtied the air,
When the plants couldn't grow people despaired,
They left if they could with the money they had,
Or they stayed, persevered, and almost went mad.

But then time went on and people forgot,
That it ever was not, so empty and hot,
They treasure their water from so far away,
And stay behind glass, indoors all the day.

My greenest green dreams are not so fantastic,
They are just a hope we can all be elastic,
And bounce ourselves into some balance again,
After being so cruel to our natural friends.

My greenest green dream is that we will all learn to play,
And sing with the birds and let the flowers come stay,
I travel the lands to heal and show how,
Things can still change; change even now.

There's still lot's to be done in this dusty place,
Lucky our love, we couldn't erase,
Your plants in their glass know this is to be true,
And I think that this change could be within you.

The dry winds came when love was ignored,
But maybe if we all moved a little bit forward,
Or even sideways, to somewhere more free,
We could all live in my greenest green dream.

Traveling slowly through an uncertain utopia

By Freyja Catron

Last autumn I drove a friend's car back from New South Wales to Melbourne. After a cold night bush camping somewhere near the ACT I took to that long, boring stretch of highway between Sydney and Melbourne. Travelling alone and with my phone dead, I scrolled through the channels of sub-par pop and country radio. Bored of the uninspiring music, I began listening to an interview with about ethical tourism on Radio National. Most of the content of the interview I've forgotten by now, but one thing stuck with me. When it comes down to it, the presenter said, I don't think tourism can ever be ethical, not when we're flying everywhere.

I'm no big believer in the powers of individual change so I don't think I'll stop flying any time soon. But it has made me wonder, in a different world - in my own, personal 'utopia' what would we do about flying.

When I began thinking about my 'utopia,' I understood that it would not come without sacrificing some the luxuries and privileges enjoyed by many Australians. But losing some of the efficiencies of industrial, global capitalism hardly feels like a sacrifice compared to the benefits of my post capitalist society: community control and autonomy, real participatory democracy and indigenous sovereignty, sustainability and self-sufficiency.

One of these sacrifices would certainly be the casual use of air travel enjoyed by so many privileged Aussies. As one such privileged Aussie, my flights up to New South Wales every year often exceeds what I can count on one hand. In 2018, I visited my grandparents in the UK for the first time in years. They live in a village in Yorkshire, with my aunt and uncle, and because it was nearly Christmas, my cousins were home too. My sister and my cousins and me drove to the North Yorkshire Moors one day. We sang Kate Bush and hiked along the cliffside. I only stayed with them for a few days, but it was a rare, special visit and I wonder in my 'utopia' would overseas family visits even be possible. I'm aware that this is a small and privileged predicament to be faced with when trying to picture how a better world would look but I find myself thinking about it every time I fly.

As Patti Smith says: Fuck the clock! An important element of our post capitalist Melbourne would be a different attitude toward time. Inspired by Mykaela Saunder's short story 'Buried Time,' published in Overland earlier this year, I imagine our clocks burning on a bonfire in the middle of Federation Square. Without regimented time and an obsession with efficiency, perhaps flying wouldn't seem so necessary for travel. Without deadlines and rosters, a slower, less urgent version of travel would be much more possible and probably much more enjoyable than air travel.

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I imagine visiting my family in Yorkshire in a *fuck the clock* world. We set out early one morning. We'd been planning it for some time but had never really decided on a day. That day seemed right because it felt warmer and the rain had stopped. We packed our bags and set off down what was once Sydney Road, through the long cattail grass and the olive trees that grow in that part of the city. People were already awake, it was the beginning of the Kulin Nation season of Petyan, the season of wildflowers, and the time to plant potatoes and eggplants and pak choy. We felt a small longing to stay and help with the planting and breath in the smell of wattle in the air, but we kept heading north.

Many nights had passed, sometimes camping under redgums, sometimes sleeping in homes along the road before we reached what was once Sydney. When we were tired, we jumped the slow moving train that travels between the two cities. From the edge of the carriage, we would watch the flocks of cockatoos fly above the reforestation projects. Sometimes, we thought of the past and the quick, expensive trains that used to travel with such urgency down these tracks. The urgency seemed irrelevant now. We spoke of staying on the train all the way to the city but at every small town we felt enticed to jump off again, eat lunch in the town and spend another night in some farm house or camped by a creek. We were in no rush. In the city we stayed for some time with friends, helping in the gardens and swimming in the Pacific. It was warm by then, almost hot in the sub-tropical humidity.

One afternoon, we heard that the boat had arrived in the harbour and we could join them the next day if we wanted. It wasn't a big ship, not like the kind that used to transport shipping containers across the world. The crew was a small group, many who lived on the boat almost permanently. We wondered if they missed the land or staying in one place, but they seemed to love the boat and the waves beneath it.

A whole season would have passed at home before we reached Portsmouth. We followed the springtime North-West through the rainy season in Jakarta, the heat of Sri Lanka and the dry hills of the Spanish coast. Sometimes we stopped for a day on land, sometimes for nights. It was summer by the time we reached Portsmouth and we were almost sad to leave the ocean behind but the soil felt warm and good under our feet and we began to head north. It rained often and we were happy to reach Yorkshire and the comfort of my grandparents' house in the village. We spent the evening with them walking the dogs out through the farmland.

Stump

By Harley Hefford

I have found a great tree stump
Halfway along the bike route between
My home and my new workplace.
It's smooth and flat, a round table.

Truly, I must've considered stopping to
Grace its woody majesty twelve times
Before listening to myself and coming to a pause.
Now I peer from it, over a steep valley, buzzing green with applause.

I remember similar impulses to stop
At an intriguing sign or sweet river.
Forced myself not to, faking urgency.
'Gotta get going,' I'd tell myself, 'that
scenery's not vital, not today's purpose.'

I remember impulses to catch hold of a cloud. To stare at a rock, obliterate it via telekinesis. To make everybody! Dance! Right now! To roll down valleys just like this one, until my torso was dizzy & my jumper strewn with nature. To spend days, multiple flowing days, converting my ephemeral feelings into the flammable mathematics of music. To simplify, to simply fly, to transfigure into bird, migrate to South America, eat community-based meals, drink sangria.

There's a wedge-shaped hole in the tree stump, like someone's cut themselves a tiny cake slice. I imagine life inside the wedge world, the most expensive houses right near the opening, looking out onto everything. The tougher neighbourhood up near the point of the wedge, where all is narrow and dark. I imagine a tiny nymph who lives in the mid-section, distracted in the midst of her daily scurrying about. She notices a light above, so rich and complex that it must be more than just the sun, it is clearly the light of an entire harmonious world full of joy and mistakes and love, full of organisms beyond her comprehension.

Sinking into the Sea
By Anastasia Vanderbyl

The utopias left behind

By Sarah Moore

Those who were fixated on the techno-fix, stocked dehydrated meats and departed on their private ships. First, they were only gone for a short while, taking their clocks and frothy coffees to an empty view of the moon. Large drills churned the dark, basaltic plains of the moon, as if the space capitalists wanted to turn wine into water. Later they went asteroid mining near Venus, where they found gold and platinum for their gilded spaceships.

Every time they refuelled on Earth, there were floods, fires and enough angry people to consume them all. Eventually all the space capitalists strayed farther and farther away from the blue planet. Too far away to care that their Earth mines had filled with rain. Or that all the people left behind organised into other formations, like flocks of birds always dispersing, regrouping and sharing whatever was left behind. Governments and borders were dismantled, the forests regrew, and we knew that ruins are not the same as rubble. Some people left behind remembered the catchphrase from May 1969. *Sous les pavés, la plage!* Under the paving stones, there is a beach. We lived in the former summer houses, until those grand houses fell into the sea.

Turning my head to the sky, I occasionally see the glimmer of a floating extraction station. There are whispers that there are platinum spaceships, bitcoin banks and endless reserves of astronaut ice cream up there. Some days I drive a truck to share grain with the communities in the dry lands, and I can see the space debris that landed in our fields of flowering beans. Other days I do different tasks, I decide to walk with the sheep, or to paint infrastructure green. The sun rises and falls each day, and I lean back into the hillsides, happier to be left behind.

Eye dotted earth
By Emily Cork

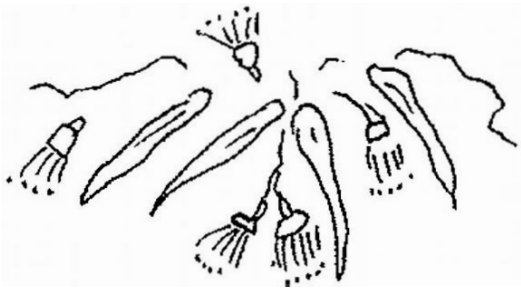
"Change is freedom, change is life.

It's always easier not to think for oneself. Find a nice safe hierarchy and settle in. Don't make changes, don't risk disapproval, don't upset your syndics. It's always easiest to let yourself be governed.

There's a point, around age twenty, when you have to choose whether to be like everybody else the rest of your life, or to make a virtue of your peculiarities.

Those who build walls are their own prisoners. I'm going to go fulfil my proper function in the social organism. I'm going to go unbuild walls."

— Ursula Le Guin, The Dispossessed



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